

ERICA THIRL'S DOG

My nose is wet and shiny, and I never clean my teeth,
Sometimes I lie upon my back and show my underneath,
I do things on the pavement when I'm taken to the shops,
And instead of being punished, I am given chocolate drops.
My name is "Sit", I think, although it might be "Fetch" or "Stay",
But whatever people call me I come running anyway,
And I live with Mrs Thirl in quiet South Coastal widowhood,
And we walk and talk together while she throws me bits of wood.

Sometimes she thinks that I can understand each single word;
I can't. That's why I never find her chattering absurd.
I cannot reason, cannot laugh, I cannot count to ten;
I count one, and then more-than-one, then more-than-one again.
Yet people in their more-than-ones to pets like me will turn
For friendship and companionship – both words I cannot learn –
For my conditioned reflexes are just designed to fill
The gap that's left by humans when they're absent, cross or ill.

I never see why I'm considered Mrs Thirl's best friend,
Until her daughter Lynne brings all her brood for the weekend.
The Mrs Thirl from dawn to dusk makes orange juice and cake,
And Lynne says she stays with Don only for the children's sake.
And Mrs Thirl says, "Darling, your Dad was just the same.
Children run out in the garden, Gran's too busy for a game."
Then Lynne goes boo-hoo-hoo and says that next time will be final,
And as they cry I lick their salty tears from off the vinyl.

My life's not complicated like the humans she adores,
I don't complain of migraine, or go through the dogopause,
I don't forget to thank her for my birthday postal order,
I never kick my football into her herbaceous border.
I cannot help but wag my tail and pant apparent thanks
(I've no alternative – I'm thick as more-than-one short planks),
But my wagging, and my panting, and my dying-for-the-Queen
Is the nearest thing to true love Mrs Thirl has ever seen.